

# Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office



MARCH 2015

- **Lakewood:**  
Pam Sponholtz, Project Leader, Joann Wise, Budget Admin
- **Buckley Air Force Base, Aurora:** Krystal Phillips, Wildlife Biologist, Dustin Casady, Bio Tech
- **Peterson, Schriever, Cheyenne Mtn Air Force Bases, Colorado Springs:** Max Canestorp, Wildlife Biologist
- **US Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs:** Brian Mhlbachler, Biological Scientist, Diane Strohm, Biological Scientist, Steve Wallace, Forestry Technician, Melissa Whittingslow, Wildlife Biologist
- **Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park:** Chris Kennedy, Fish Biologist
- **Warren Air Force Base, Cheyenne, WY:** Timothy Grosch, Fish and Wildlife Biologist  
**McConnell Air Force Base:** Laura Mendenhall, Fish and Wildlife Biologist
- **Pueblo Chemical Depot, Pueblo, CO:** Clark Jones, Wildlife Biologist

## Leadership in Science and Technology

**Sharing Geospatial Information:** During the upcoming field season, numerous contractors will be conducting surveys on Pueblo Chemical Depot (PCD) on various taxa. PCD contains numerous restricted areas that are off limits to foot traffic because of hazards related to former and current military activities on the depot. In order to ensure the safety of contractors and field crews, PCD staff needed a simple way to share geospatial information in a format that was easily accessible and did not require contractors to use expensive Trimble GPS receivers. To achieve this, Clark Jones created KML files of restricted areas that are viewable in Google Earth and compatible with both Android and iOS smartphone platforms.

For contractors without a smartphone (or poor reception), track logs outlining the restricted areas were created for Garmin



GPS receivers using the DNRGPS application. These approaches are simple, inexpensive solutions to ensure field-crew safety during surveying activities.

**Aerial Monitoring for Ips Beetle Infestation.** Diane Strohm coordinated with Cadets, Airfield staff and Base Contracting to develop a Statement of Work for a con-

tract for flights to track bark beetle activity in Academy forests. Natural Resources is partnering with Cadets to employ technology to identify actively-infested (brood) trees using aerial flights and infrared spectrometry.

**Genetic Matrixing:** Chris Kennedy visited Mora National Fish Hatchery in New Mexico to gain information on genetic matrixing of Gila trout. A similar type project will be instituted at the Leadville NFH for greenback cutthroat trout and the information gained will be used to enhance this project.

## Partnerships and Accountability

**National Military Fish and Wildlife Association (NMFWA):** COFWCO staff attended the annual meeting in Omaha, Nebraska. The gathering brought together natural resource managers, Department of Defense (DoD) leadership, and USFWS personnel for 5 days to discuss the state of natural resources management on DoD lands. Some of the highlights

included meeting DOD personnel, learning how to incorporate climate change into management plans and attending a lecture on wetlands restoration at Edwards Air Force Base.

**Kansas Tree City USA Meeting**  
Laura Mendenhall represented McConnell Air Force Base at the Kansas Forest Service's (KFS)

annual Tree City USA Meeting in Topeka, Kansas. Foresters with KFS and Kansas State University lectured on drought-tolerant trees and pest management while a city planner from Kansas City, Kansas discussed urban forestry.



# Species Conservation and Management

*Pronghorn management:* Tim Grosch began investigating pronghorn management alternatives in conjunction with the removal program. Initial counts indicate that removal is having little effect in overall pronghorn numbers however it is still early in the program. Other management techniques may be needed in addition to current activities to ensure the population are brought to preferred levels. Pronghorn depredation is currently on hold until October 2015 when

our permit is valid again. A pronghorn management alternative document was written and presented to DoD. We are currently awaiting feedback on whether any recommendations will be implemented. Monthly surveys indicate the Base herd is still hovering around that 400+ animal mark with sex ratios consistently remaining at 1:1 buck to doe.

*Greenback Cutthroat Trout (GBCT) Publication:* At the re-

quest of Kevin Rogers, Colorado Aquatic Research Scientist with Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Krystal was selected to assist with a species status publication. During March, Krystal continued to work with the GBCT database to collect and submit requested data for this important analysis

# Habitat Conservation and Management

*SCA AmeriCorps Natural Resource Internships.* The national agreement between the USFWS and Student Conservation Association serves to support America's conservation corps by providing college and high school-aged members with hands-on conservation service opportunities. By merging several COFWCO habitat conservation and man-

agement military projects on Air Force installations, Krystal was successfully able to support and offer four natural resource internships to accomplish invasive plant species management; trail maintenance; and wildlife barrier habitat modification. Specifically during the month of March, Krystal coordinated with SCA staff and applicants

to hire interns; duties included – application review and selection; interviews; logistical field planning; funding documentation; and housing referrals. As a result, Krystal was able to effectively hire three interns in March. Interns will be working for the COFWCO for 22 weeks in Colorado and Wyoming.

*Forest Thinning Preparation.* Steve Wallace continued preparing a forest thinning unit along the west Academy boundary. Located adjacent to the Pike National forest and in direct proximity to a military training site, this project is an important addition to a recent adjacent fuelbreak clearing.

*Wildland Fuels Reduction.* Diane Strohm focused on fuels reduction projects in proximity to Falcon Stadium. Heavy recreational use during special

events such as Graduation and football games increase the risk of a fire start, while heavy, dead fuels and steep terrain west of the stadium pose a hazard for potential rapid fire spread. Clearing along the shoulder of the heavily traveled Academy Drive improved safety and visibility along this corridor, which included a Falcon Trail trailhead and frequent wildlife crossings.

*Prescribed Burn to Enhance Rare Plant Species.* Steve Wallace

prepared a prescribed fire burn plan for an upcoming prescribed burn to benefit the rare Plains Ironweed (*Vernonia marginata*). This will be the second broadcast burn designed to inhibit the invasive smooth brome grass that is competing with this rare forb. Plains ironweed is a State Species of Concern, with only two known populations in Colorado. The Academy is coordinating closely with USFWS and Academy Fire staff.

# Rare sighting on Pueblo Chemical Depot



During a rainstorm in late March, an interesting duck showed up at Pueblo Chemical Depot's Lynda Ann Reservoir. Initially identified as a Northern Mallard hybrid with the Mexican Mallard subspecies, it was later determined to be a Mallard X Mottled Duck hybrid. This is only the second confirmed sighting of this hybrid in the state of Colorado.

**Comprehensive  
trails map  
under  
development  
for the  
Academy,  
Farish  
Recreation  
Area and the  
Rampart Range**

## State of the U.S. Air Force Academy

Brian Mihlbachler was invited to attend Lt General Michelle Johnson's (Superintendent) address on the "State of USAFA", which gave an overview of the Air Force's vision for the Academy's cultural and religious diversity, environmental stewardship, character and leadership development, and educational and military training objectives. Invitees included state and local

government officials, business leaders, community activists, and religious leaders. Stormwater was briefly mentioned as an area where greater partnership and cooperation is needed to address ongoing problems.

Brian provided a tour of Monument Creek to representatives of the Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) Team from the DoD Office of Economic

Adjustment (OEA). Ongoing stormwater impacts to riparian areas, wetlands, and Preble's meadow jumping mouse habitat from development adjacent to the installation was discussed. OEA may be able to facilitate funding for future stormwater and habitat restoration projects to benefit the Academy.

## Important Training

**Cultural Resources:** Clark Jones attended cultural resource training on historical archaeology of Colorado in March. This course covered several important topics related to cultural resource management in Colorado including how to define categories of historic properties, National Register criteria for evaluation of historic sites, and researching historic properties.

This training was conducted by the Colorado Archaeological Society and the Office of the State Archaeologist.

**NRA rifle course:** COFWCO employees attended a NRA basic rifle course taught by Laramie County Shooting Sports Complex. The class was very educational and taught us the fundamentals of prop-

er rifle use. The group learned in both the classroom as well as on the range. Shane and William Coppinger from Thunderbeast Arms Corporation also presented a unique tool used to address hearing safety, recoil reduction and accuracy. A suppressor is a device that attaches to the end of a rifle barrel that will address all of these issues while for some create a more comfortable shooting experience.

